

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE  
AT KNOXVILLE

BOB MARLEY a/k/a  
IROKO PHILLIPS,

Plaintiff,

v.

No.: 3:13-cv-03  
(VARLAN/SHIRLEY)

JASON WOODALL, et al.,

Defendants.

**MEMORANDUM**

This *pro se* prisoner's civil rights action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 was filed *in forma pauperis* in the United States District Court for the Western District of Tennessee, Eastern Division, and transferred to this Court without service of process. For the reasons stated below, process shall not issue and this action will be **DISMISSED**.

In order to state a claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, plaintiff must establish that he was deprived of a federal right by a person acting under color of state law. *Black v. Barberton Citizens Hospital*, 134 F.3d 1265, 1267 (6th Cir. 1998); *O'Brien v. City of Grand Rapids*, 23 F.3d 990, 995 (6th Cir. 1994); *Russo v. City of Cincinnati*, 953 F.2d 1036, 1042 (6th Cir. 1992). *See also Braley v. City of Pontiac*, 906 F.2d 220, 223 (6th Cir. 1990) ("Section 1983 does not itself create any constitutional rights; it creates a right of action for the vindication of constitutional guarantees found elsewhere.").

Under the Prison Litigation Reform Act (PLRA), district courts must screen prisoner complaints and sua sponte dismiss those that are frivolous or malicious, fail to state a claim for relief, or are against a defendant who is immune. *See, e.g., Benson v. O'Brian*, 179 F.3d 1014 (6th Cir. 1999).

Responding to a perceived deluge of frivolous lawsuits, and, in particular, frivolous prisoner suits, Congress directed the federal courts to review or "screen" certain complaints sua sponte and to dismiss those that failed to state a claim upon which relief could be granted, that sought monetary relief from a defendant immune from such relief, or that were frivolous or malicious.

*Id.* at 1015-16 (6th Cir. 1999) (citing 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2) and 1915A).

Plaintiff is in the custody of the Tennessee Department of Correction (TDOC) and housed at the Morgan County Correctional Complex (MCCX). The defendants are TDOC Deputy Commissioner of Operations Jason Woodall, MCCX Warden Tony Howerton, Chaplain Cantrell, Grievance Board Chairperson Robert Bruce, and an unnamed MCCX Gang Coordinator.

Plaintiff makes vague and general claims that he is entitled to a vegetarian diet because he is a Rastafarian, that his grievances have been ignored, that he is listed as a gang member, and that he is entitled to indigent supplies. Plaintiff, however, fails to make specific allegations against any of the individual defendants. For that reason, plaintiff's complaint fails to state a claim for relief. "[A] plaintiff must plead that each Government-official defendant, through the official's own individual actions, has violated the Constitution." *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 676 (2009).

In addition, to the extent plaintiff may be attempting to impose liability upon one or more of the defendants because of their supervisory positions, in a suit brought under § 1983, liability cannot be imposed solely on the basis of respondeat superior. *Polk County v. Dodson*, 454 U.S. 312, 325 (1981); *Bellamy v. Bradley*, 729 F.2d 416, 421 (6th Cir. 1984). The law is well-settled that a plaintiff must allege that a defendant official was personally involved in the unconstitutional activity of a subordinate in order to state a claim against such a defendant. *Dunn v. State of Tennessee*, 697 F.2d 121, 128 (6th Cir. 1982). "[L]iability cannot be based solely on the right to control employees." *Leach v. Shelby County Sheriff*, 891 F.2d 1241, 1246 (6th Cir. 1989).

Although this Court is mindful that a *pro se* complaint is to be liberally construed, *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 520-21 (1972), it is quite clear that the plaintiff has not alleged the deprivation of any constitutionally protected right, privilege or immunity, and, therefore, the Court finds his claims to be frivolous under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e) and 1915A. It appears beyond doubt that plaintiff can prove no set of facts which would entitle him to relief, *Malone v. Colyer*, 710 F.2d 258 (6th Cir. 1983), and that plaintiff's claim lacks an arguable basis in law and fact, *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989). Therefore, this action will be **DISMISSED** *sua sponte*, as frivolous and for failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted under § 1983. The Court will **CERTIFY** that any appeal from

this action would not be taken in good faith and would be totally frivolous. *See* Rule 24 of the Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure.

**AN APPROPRIATE ORDER WILL ENTER.**

s/ Thomas A. Varlan  
CHIEF UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE